DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 207 052 CS 206 454

AUTHOR Mills, Rilla Dean
TITLE American Reporters/Soviet Reporters: A Convergence?
PUB DATE Aug 81
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism (64th, East Lansing, MI, August 8-11, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Communism; Comparative Analysis; Foreign Countries; Freedom of Speech; *Journalism; *News Reporting; *Political Influences
IDENTIFIERS Lenin (Vladimir); *News Reporters; Objectivity; *Russia; United States

ABSTRACT

While the concept of "objective" reporting in the United States has been under attack from critics who demanded more interpretation from the press, a move in the opposite direction seems to be taking place in the Soviet Union, as the concept of journalist as strictly an advocate for the Communist party seems to be giving way to the concept of impartial reporting. Lenin's emphasis on what readers needed to prepare them for the new Soviet society instead of what they wanted led to a denigration of traditional news items, but recently the Soviet press has been willing to publish at least abbreviated accounts of natural disasters. Soviet journalists have developed three ways to cope with the problem of the Leninist view of journalism: they can ignore the issues for which they have no clear guidelines from the party; they can report and investigate aggressively on such issues, taking a position that seems to agree with the Leninist principals; or they can approach the issue as an American reporter might, without any firm preconceptions and with determination to examine all possible points of view. While the Leninist view will never elevate the concept of objectivity to the status it has enjoyed in American journalism, some Soviet reporters value the concept out of a newly emerging professional pride. (HTH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED207052

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

International Division

AMERICAN REPORTERS/SOVIET REPORTERS: A CONVERGENCE?

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Rilla Dean Mills

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Rilla Dean Mills
Associate Professor
Department of Communications
California State University, Fullerton
Fullerton, California
(714) 773-3517

Presented to the International Division of the Association for Education in Journalism annual convention, East Lansing, Michigan, August, 1981.

CS206454

The birth, triumph, and fall from grace of the concept of "objective" reporting in the United States has been discussed by a number of scholars.[1] Beginning particularly in the nineteen sixties, the concept was under attack from critics who demanded more interpretation from the American press. Data collected as part of a study of twelve years' editions of Zhurnalist, organ of the Soviet Union of Journalists, indicate that a curious move in the opposite direction seems to be taking place in the Soviet Union. The traditional concept of a journalist as exclusively an advocate for the Communist Party seems to be making some concessions to a new concept of the journalist as an impartial reporter of information. An intensive reading of articles dealing with the role of reporter (reportyor in Russian) shows the role is getting grudging respect in a country whose media structure is, in theory, radically different from that in the United States.

On the pages of Zhurnalist the role of reporter is only beginning to shed some of its image as a pallid and inferior relative of the publicist. It is of course to be expected that reporting would have relatively low prestige within a press system which has cherished ideolcgical activism in its journalists. An open disregard, occasionally an outright contempt, for "pure information" can be traced to Lenin himself. His view of the press as a collective agitator, propagandist, and organizer for the party almost dictated that the reporter would have second-rank status compared to the publicist. In his draft article, "The Next Tasks of Soviet Rule," he stressed the urgency of transforming the press "from an organ which is for the most part merely announcing polit-

ical news into an important organ of economic re-education of the masses."[2] News, Lenin said, was to be subordinated to the need to re-educate the masses for the new order being built.

> Let us have ten times less news (perhaps it would be better if there were a hundred times less) related to so-called actualities, but let us spread in hundreds of thousands and in millions of copies such a press as would acquaint all the population with the model work of several communes which surpass all other communes in the state.[3]

Buzek sums up the subordinate role which news was to play in the Leninist conception:

> News and information, Lenin maintained, were necessary because without them it was impossible to make propaganda and agitation. But if they did not serve this purpose, if they only informed for the sake of informing, they were useless and could be more damaging than useful. In his conception all news, every piece of information, must have an inner tendency, must point to a certain goal, and must agitate for something.[4]

This emphasis on what the reader needed (to prepare him for the new Soviet society) instead of what he wanted (to persuade him to buy a newspaper, a primary consideration in a capitalist press system) led rather naturally to a denigration of traditional news items which have high readership value but low educational potential. Accounts of crimes, fires, train and airplane crashes, and other unpredictable events which cannot be fitted neatly into a picture of a harmonious society have always had to fight for space in Soviet newspapers. In the post-Stalin era, however, the prohibition on such "sensationalistic" news items has not been complete. Western readers of the Soviet press have noticed an increased willingness to publish at least abbreviated accounts of natural disasters.

Soviet journalists have sometimes indicated in conversations with Westerners that there are two reasons for the changed attitude. Professional pride smarts, for one thing, when Soviet audiences must learn about a domestic news event from foreign broadcasts rather than their own media. And the authorities have apparently learned that rumors of unreported events can be more damaging to the Soviet image than reality, however grim.

> There is no such thing as an information vacuum. People will satisfy their curiosity in one way or another, but in that case the news may come to them from dishonorable sources. It has been pointed out more than once that lack of information in the periodical press is one of the reasons for the arisal of rumors and idle talk.[5]

The Soviet concept of information or news--the terms, in Russian informatsiya and novosti, correspond roughly to "news briefs" and "news stories" in American terminology--differs from the Western, particularly the American, idea of "objective," neutral reportage. Leninist theory, with its almost Puritan ideal of a purposive press, has no room for information which does not in some way advance the cause of the party. Even the smallest news item, it is expected, will be met with this criterion in mind. Soviet journalists, unlike American ones, are not expected to avoid interpretation in their reportage. Indeed, a point of view is often a desideratum. The distinguishing characteristic of the reporter is not detachment or neutrality; it is his/her concentration on the account of an event or phnomenon as the primary responsibility. The publicist, by contrast, concentrates on persuasion or exhortation. The same event which would be the focus of an article by a reporter might be merely an excuse for a publi-

cist to write a major article putting forth a theory for a social, economic, political, or international problem and proposing a solution.

Soviet journalists who consider themselves reporters clearly feel their star is ascending. Occasional directives from the party calling for the more efficient gathering of information give them some support.

> Without question, measures taken by the Central Committee during recent years for the further improvement in making the public informed have had their effect on the press. . . Newspapers now give their readers more information and have improved its contents. It covers wider spheres of social life, its efficiency has been increased. High quality reportage and good interviews have appeared.[6]

Still, in their struggle for the respectability always accorded publicists, reporters face the difficulties of any newcomer taking on an entrenched figure. It is sigificant, for example, that the resolution of the Fourth Congress of Journalists in 1977, and the address to the congress by the secretary of the Governing Board of the Union of Journalists contained no mention of the journalist as reporter. At the same time both documents stressed the importance of the journalist in his/her roles as warrior of the party and publicist.[7] An excerpt from the resolution suggests the reason: It is difficult to fit the reporter,

with his/her preeminent concern for what even Soviet writers call "facts," into the activist mold of the ideal Soviet journalist.

> Each of us is deeply conscious of the fact that to fulfill the important obligations which the party has given us, the journalist must tirelessly grasp the Leninist skill of convincing the masses, must develop in himself the high ideological-moral qualities of a political warrior, must be not a contemplater and recorder of

> events but rather an active participant in all the achievements of the Soviet people. [8]

Nearly ten years earlier, a reporter writing in Zhurnalist discussed the ambivalence of the Soviet reporter's position. On the one hand, he wrote, reporters had a charge from the party to give special attention to "systematic and timely information to the working class about the party's politics, about events within the country and abroad, about current goals and the outlook for the future." In fact,

> The well-known underestimation of information is behind us. The reporter is recognized, he is respected. The section of reporters is one of the biggest in the Union of Journalists. Reporters publish book after book. Books are also written about their works. [9]

Yet reporters themselves still undervalue their work. Letters to Zhurnalist make it clear that many journalists consider work as reporters at best a stepping stone to more prestigious jobs, at worst a sign of failure.

> Here is one of the letters to the editors, and in it the offhand phrase about a comrade: "a reporter, nothing more. . ." The writer has in mind a certain ideological immaturity: he gives a fact but isn't capable of pointing out its significance. Here are excerpts from two more letters: "I'm 35 but I'm still a reporter. . .", "The editor said, 'you'll have to remain a reporter for a while.'" [10]

The Zhurnalist writer concludes that practice does not accord the reporter the same respect accorded him in theory.

> What's the reason for this unequivocal neglect in valuing the journalist who specializes in information? It would be easiest to conclude that it is accidental. But then why is work in the information department often seen as only a midway step in the acquisition of genuine professionalism? Indeed, even the job title, "reporter," does not exist on the staff of many newspapers.
>
> It turns out that the demands made on the reporter by society do not correspond to the place accorded the

reporter within the profession.[11]

Six years later, another Zhurnalist article suggested the situation had not improved. Reporters were seldom recognized on the "Bulletin Boards of Honor," on which materials judged outstanding are posted. And they seldom collected the cash premiums given for the best work.[12]

The ambiguous approach even partisans of reportage take to the subject suggests that the problem may be intrinsic to the Leninist understanding of journalism.

Yet there seems to be agreement on the need for improved reportage. the party demands more and better reporting of information--apparently, although this is not said explicitly, because the very nature of a modern industrial society requires that individual political, economic, and cultural units understand something of what is happening in the rest of the society in order to plan their own behavior rationally. What is more, the increasing use of reader research by Soviet media has increased sensitivity to the audience's wishes. At least some

reader studies have shown a big appetite for information. A researcher studying readers in Kharkov, for example, concluded that the success of a newspaper depends upon the quality of its news: ninety two percent of the readers were interested first of all in information.[13] A number of other studies, some of which are reported in Zhurnalist in some detail, also suggest reader preference for news relatively unadorned by commentary and moralizing. Some research, notably one study of Izvestiya readership in 1968,

suggests surpisingly high readership of editorials and long political articles, much higher than journalists and other specialists expected. But such results seem open to question, occurring as they do in a society in which lack of interest in the affairs of the party and government is considered unpatriotic at best, treasonous at worst.

The problem reporters face in defending their product is symbolized by the standing headline used by Zhurnalist over a discussion of the role of reporting which continued during several issues of the magazine in 1972: "Agitation with Facts." The advocate of more reporting must deal with the Leninist dictum that all content of the media have a propaganda function. But even Lenin himself at times valued unadorned fact, however, and can be cited to bolster arguments for more reporting. Thus one Zhurnalist writer noted:

> Beginning his day with the newspaper, V.I. Lenin again and again sought in it "more facts and verified facts, showing in what ways, under what conditions, we are going forward or standing in place or losing ground."[14]

Pains are taken, nevertheless, to make it clear that Lenin's ideal reporter, for all his/her interest in facts, was not neutral, not merely a recorder of events,

> not simply a detached portrayer of morals and manners, not a "reflector," but an active participant in events, an analyst, a researcher, selecting the clearer, the more characteristic facts of his time, his epoch, facts which are capable, in turn, of acting upon the reader.[15]

Yet the same writer, having made the obligatory bow to the Leninist concept of participatory journalism, begins to sound almost like an American editor in his evaluation of news.

> The reporter, like no one else, must be sensitive to his reader. Will this or that fact interest the reader? If it will, then the reporter has no right to pass that fact by, even if at first glance it seems to be insignificant.[16]

The article attacks the tendency of newspapers to praise as extraordinary events those ordinary accomplishments of Soviet society.

> [W]e have lost our taste for the fact of real life, have lost the sense of its freshness and significance. . . . we suffer a lack of confidence in the fact, we hasten to cover it with commentary, not stopping to think, won't this word-embellishment be superfluous, wouldn't it be better in this instance simply to give information?[17]

Yet unembellished "fact" and sensitivity to readers' tastes can lead, some Soviet journalists fear, into a very capitalist-like bind. Giving the readers what they want, the reporter may not be giving them what they need. One writer in Zhurnalist argues the need for more and better news coverage. But he stresses that information is not neutral in the Leninist conception, and the Soviet reporter must not sacrifice "social importance" to readability., He seems to suggest that the "incidentalness" of the disconnected event--the very life's blood of American journalism since the days of the Penny Press--threatens the connected view of reality which it is the Soviet journalist's duty to maintain.

> Newspaper information is above all a means of Communist education, of the formation of public opinion and civic consciousness. But . . . this criterion for evaluating information frequently disappears, being replaced by a conception of so-called "readability," which at times restrains a search for genuinely interesting facts of existence. Under such an approach to matters, accidental paragraphs, appearing for the first time, often appear on the newspaper page.
>
> Apparently the lack of firm criteria for the evaluation of the social importance of information also explains the appearance on newspaper pages of innumer-

> able "Mosaic," "Kaleidoscope," and "Panorama" sections which at times are nothing more than a selection of every kind of "snappy" news item: "The Language of Animals," "The House Made of Foam," "A Snake around the Neck," "Intelligent Cuttlefish," "Elephants Direct Traffic." No professional mastery, of course, is required of the newspaperman who puts together such a "Mosaic."[18]

The analysts writing in Zhurnalist may disagree over how much reader taste or hunger for "facts" should dictate newspaper content. But they seem united in their desire to increase the quantity and quality of information in the press.

It is here that a kind of convergence seems to be taking place between American and Soviet journalism. Since at least the McCarthy period of the nineteen fifties, and increasingly since the nineteen sixties, critics of the American press and many American journalists themselves have argued for more interpretation in the news columns, more leeway for reporters to tell the "truth behind the facts." In Soviet journalism, movement has been in the other direction. Journalists have been urged to seek out and present more reportage along with the didactic articles in which Soviet journalism has specialized from the start. The recurring appeals to Soviet reporters to be more aggressive in their search for information--some of the appeals, coming from the top of the political apparatus, really amount to commands--may indicate that the very nature of a modern industrial society, regardless of its ideology, requires a steady diet of information.

> There hasn't been a single business meeting, seminar, scientific conference devoted to information at which there hasn't been talk of the necessity for full and comprehensive elucidation of the work of party and government organs. As L.I. Brezhnev has emphasized, "publicity, informing the masses and all the working

> class of the activity of the party is a principle of our party life, and we firmly observe this principle.[19]

And the complexity of a modern industrial society often means that something approaching a capitalist standard of "objectivity" is the only way to ensure comprehensive information for the reader. In Leninist theory, of course, "objectivity" is nothing like the American concept of impartiality in reporting.

> The Marxist theory of journalism exposes these inventions [of classless or nonpartisan journalism], proving that objectivity in journalism can be achieved not by an ostentatious refusal to ignore the class struggle, but by the expression and defense of the interests of those forces which are the vehicles of progress and embody the requirements of social development.[20]

The problem with that theory in practice is that, although it may be clear to the Soviet journalist who is writing about international affairs which forces constitute "the vehicles of progress" (the Soviet government and its allies), it is not so clear when the subject matter is closer to home. How to sort out the correct class position in a domestic issue on which the party leadership has taken no position, or on which the position is ambiguous or in process of change? The complexity and fluidity of economic, social, cultural, and even, occasionally, political, life guarantees a steady supply of issues unaccompanied by clear-cut guidelines for dealing with them.

Soviet journalists have developed at least three ways to cope with the problem. They can ignore issues for which they have no clear guidelines from the party. They can report aggressively on such issues, taking a position which seems to square with overarching Leninist principles. Or they can approach the issue

in much the same way an American reporter might, without any firm preconceptions and determined to examine all possible points of view.

One might expect the first approach, ducking those areas which have not already been charted by the party, to be the most appealing to Soviet journalists. Conflicts with unhappy sources can be unpleasant under any circumstances, and normal human caution seems to be nourished by the intrinsic conservatism of a vast bureaucratic apparatus of the kind which employs the Soviet journalist. Whatever the reason, persistent complaints suggest that many, if not most, Soviet journalists avoid the risks--and the hard work--of reporting government and party affairs (in a nation in which nearly all happenings are in some way government or party affairs). At most, they simply record their occurrence.

> Unfortunately, many newspapers cannot escape the long-noted narrow boundaries of writing in the main about congresses and meetings, with the invariable list of who spoke and who attended. It would be more important to report about the decisions taken, the plans outlined, the concrete measures for the further improvement of public trade, and so on. The role of party and government news items has been clearly undervalued. They practically do not exist. Even the "Official Department" in republican and provincial newspapers consists in the main of materials from TASS.[21]

The second approach--aggressive reporting which digs beneath the surface of the event and emerges with a "correct" Leninist solution for any problems--is of course more risky. It can quickly lead to confrontation with officials. To the American journalist, conditioned to the concept of reporter as neutral observer, the product might seem more editorial than reportage, for in this approach, exhortation to take a prescribed course of action is

part of the article. But it is of course in keeping with the Soviet conception of journalist as activist. And it is the kind of reportage which wins praise in Zhurnalist. With "initiative and persistence," argued the same writer who deplored the superficial accounts of meetings, journalists can produce

> interesting information about the activities of party committees, primary party organs, governmental executive committees and their departments. . . . for example Zabaikalsky Worker, in addition to party and government news items, periodically publishes short articles about the meetings of the oblast committee of the Party. These are not just lists of questions discussed but also criticism of specific persons and reports on the important decisions made by the party committee. The Moscow Oblast newspaper Lenin's Banner has published pointed reportage on the meetings of the party commission of the Moscow Committee of the Party.[22]

The third approach at times resembles the American concept of "objectivity" in news reporting. Indeed, despite the particularistic official definition of objectivity, Soviet journalists and media researchers often use the word in the same sense as American journalists use it-- to mean impartial, or fair. Thus, in a 1968 reader research study, respondents were asked whether they thought Izvestia covered foreign news "sufficiently fully and objectively."[23] And Rafael Bukartsev, "responsible secretary" for Vechernii Sverdlovsk, ignores the idea of class position and suggests a standard with which few American reporters would disagree:

> [It] seems to me the development of norms, even if very general ones, of professional ethics for journalists is a vital necessity. One of those norms, in my view, should be a comprehensive study of his subject matter and, of special importance, an absolute impartiality, a lack of preconceptions in his research, which guarantees that he will not take a onesided approach to people, to events. It is a very strict standard.[24]

It is fascinating that "objectivity," in an almost American sense, should be at all attractive within a system of journalism which officially espouses a partisan spirit. The evidence is too scanty to provide anything more than material for some interesting conjecture. But this seemingly spontaneous emergence of "objectivity" in theoretically hostile territory would seem to indicate that historians of American journalism may have given rather too much weight to the importance of peculiarly American philosophical and historical conditions in the development of "objective" news in the late nineteenth century American press. Siebert, for example, attributes the development of objectivity in the American media to the philosophical constructs of the libertarian theory of the press, to the need for unbiased news accounts which could be sold by the new wire associations to newspapers of any political stripe, and to the general decline of partisanness in the American press.[25] Clearly those preconditions do not exist in the Soviet Union. Could it be that another factor, one which Siebert mentions in passing--"professional pride"--was the real key? Bukartsev's suggestion that impartiality be made a norm of journalistic professional ethics (which is to say distinctive, or apart from the ethos of the larger society) indicates that, at least for some Soviet journalists, "professional pride" hungers for impartiality and fairness as standards. Perhaps, in part, as a sign of ethical values and therefore of entitlement to respect? Journalists' anxious measuring of audience belief about their degree of objectivity seems to support such an interpretation. Clearly the Soviet reporter, with his Leninist charge to further

the goals of the workers' revolution, will never elevate the concept of objectivity to the central, formal place it occupied in early twentieth century American journalism. And clearly, within a bureaucracy controlled by the party, he will never carry impartiality to the point of challenging governmental policies, as an American reporter is expected to do. But as a matter of ordinary workaday practice, at least some Soviet reporters value a concept of objectivity that seems not far from the American understanding of that term.

In a number of other ways, the ideal Soviet reporter even more closely resembles the ideal American reporter. A journalism text by John Hohenberg, one of the standard texts in the field,[26] lists the characteristics of the professional journalist as "courage, persistence, vitality, moral purpose, aggressiveness, outstanding talent as a writer, technical excellence." Moral purpose and writing talent are considered essential characteristics of the Soviet journalist, so much so that they are givens. If one subtracts those two qualities from the Hohenberg definition, his is nearly a duplicate of this Soviet one, suggested by Vladimir Ye. Chertkov, a special correspondent for Pravda who identifies himself as a reporter:

> [T]here are in my opinion some general characteristics which constitute successful reportorial material. They include the ability to see, to see everything down to the smallest detail, the ability to conduct a conversation, resourcefulness, often also courage, and, the main thing, efficiency. One has to be able to grasp what is important, to describe it in detail, and to waste no time in doing so.[27]

Efficiency--in Russian the word is operativnost, and it seems to

include a stronger sense of speed than the English equivalent--is frequently stressed in describing the work of reporters. Reporters have since the Khrushchev era been exhorted to work faster. Handicapped by the bureaucratic and censorship apparatus which hangs over their work, Soviet reporters have traditionally been slower than their Western counterparts. In part, too, newspaper reporters in the Soviet Union, like those in the West, feel the competition of the faster electronic media. "After all," writes one Zhurnalist analyst, exasperated by the leisurely attitude of some newspapers,

> a fact reported, say, in the latest radio news broadcast, will simply be old by tomorrow, if the newspaper does not supplement it today with some new details, elaboration, and if needed, commentary.[28]

Chertkov's illustrations of a reporter in action would also be familiar to American journalists. They provide a picture of a person who is willing to go anywhere in pursuit of a story, who thinks on his feet, who refuses to give up a story just because a source will not cooperate, who is a superb tactician when chasing the elusive story.

On an assignment to cover the work of divers who must remove a sunken ship laden with explosives in order to clear a shipping lane, Chertkov found his physical courage tested.

> We went by special boat to where they were working. But I was still separated from the center of activity. Of course the material could have been gathered from the divers after they came up from the sea bottom. It seemed all there was left to do was to question them in some detail, and the reportage would be ready. Indeed, there remained nothing else to do, without undergoing the special preparation necessary for going with them under the water. Then suddenly the voice of the commanding officer:

"Comrade correspondent, perhaps you'd like to go down?"

There was no time to think it over, although in that instant, as if a movie were running inside my mind, I could see what awaited me: Sharks, a broken air tank, and various other terrors. If I hesitated a second, the commanding officer could have changed his mind after noticing my uncertainty. Or he might himself realize just what he was proposing. In a flash I looked him in the eye and, apparently, on my face he saw: I was ready! But for some reason the commanding officer again asked:

"You want to go to the bottom?"

So I slipped on some woolen underwear and they put me into a heavy diver's suit. They drilled the instructions into me: "As soon as we fasten the helmet, count to three and open the valve. Exhaust the air supply. Then again--one, two, three and open the valve."

Well, up on deck, this all seemed fine and I even cheered up. What the devil, it wasn't so frightening. But then they hung the weight of the equipment on me and my spirits fell. And then they put my feet into the lead boots, and I couldn't budge an inch. In short, they threw me into the water.

And then it began. Finding myself in unaccustomed circumstances, I forgot about counting and opened the valve whenever I felt like it. I didn't feel any particular terror. Nervousness, yes. I understood that I had to take in as much with my eyes as possible. But the pranks of the deep are cruel. First the suit pressed in on my chest, then the next moment the suit blew up because of a surplus of air, and that was still more dangerous-- you can bob around like a ball. My head became heavy, but when they asked me how I was over the radiotelephone from the ship, I answered: "Everything's okay." I don't know how I could think anything was okay. I could see the ship through a mist which covered my eyes. When they repeated the question about my condition I mumbled something. Apparently there, above, they understood and they began to bring me up. How I got back to the ship, I don't remember. My head was pounding, and I had only one thought: "Don't let me fall."

Two days I lay in the hotel recovering and I thought about the story I was going to write. If I hadn't gone down, I thought, it would not have been interesting. Now I was justified in beginning the story with these words:

"I am going below. . . ."[29]

Chertkov admits to having had doubts, after talking about the incident with an older colleague, about whether his decision to

dive amounted to "adventurism." But he concludes it was not. The reporter's duty, he argues, is to do everything possible to make a story absolutely authentic.

> In our souls, we all take an oath, like a doctor's, which obligates us to convey events fairly and truthfully, not allowing one iota of falsehood in our dispatches. I simply took advantage of an opportunity which presented itself to see the truth with my own eyes. I am convinced a reporter can't be a true reporter unless he takes risks.[30]

In fact, the demands of the profession may require the reporter to break some of the normal rules of society. In a formulation which American reporters would understand, Chertkov explains the imperative of the assignment. "I would say the reporter is a soldier. He gets an assignment, he carries it out if it kills him."[31] Assigned to cover one of the first cruises of an atom-powered icebreaker, Chertkov was denied a berth in the press section of the ship. "No matter how much I argued that my newspaper expected a story, Captain Yurii Sergeyevich Kuchiev was implacable.[32]

But his readers were not to be denied. "There, in Moscow, they were expecting news." The solution was the kind that might have occurred to an aggressive American reporter.

> I elbowed my way aboard the icebreaker secretly. With all the guests it turned out they didn't notice me. I hid in the cabin of some journalist acquaintances and ate some sandwiches, waiting for the ship to get out to sea before showing my face. Only when we had left Kola Bay did I go up to the deck. It is impossible to describe the captain's anger. But we didn't turn back. True, he did snap at me: "I won't let you transmit a single line."[33]

In the end, of course, Chertkov won the captain over. The dispatches were transmitted.

A shift is clearly taking place in the traditional balance between the two Soviet journalistic roles of publicist and reporter. Glamor still adheres to the publicist, that traditional figure of Soviet journalism who is more concerned with pointing to the truth (as seen through Leninist glasses) than uncovering fact. But the reporter, who sometimes approaches the American journalist in his/her concern for getting close to and reporting events, is clearly becoming more important. This increasing Soviet concern about the reporting of events, which includes the desire that they be reported swiftly, owes little to the Leninist tradition of journalism. It suggests some intriguing, though of course tentative support for the idea that forces other than ideology and economic systems (modern technology? the development of independent intraprofessional norms?) may be having telling effects on journalistic roles.

NOTES

1. See particularly Michael Schudson, Discovering the News, New York, 1978, Basic Books.

2. Quoted in Antony Buzek, How the Communist Press Works, London, 1964, Frederick A. Praeger, p. 169.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Zhurnalist, June, 1968, p. 6.

6. Zhurnalist, December, 1974, p. 32.

7. Zhurnalist, April, 1977, pp. 3-15.

8. Zhurnalist, April, 1977, p. 3.

9. Zhurnalist, June, 1968, p. 5.

10. Ibid., pp. 5-6.

11. Ibid., p. 6.

12. Zhurnalist, December, 1974, p. 33.

13. Ibid., p. 32.

14. Zhurnalist, June, 1968, p. 5.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., p. 6.

17. Ibid.

18. Zhurnalist, December, 1974, p. 33.

19. Ibid.

20. Bolshaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya, 3d Edition, Moscow, 1972, Vol. 9, p. 742.

21. Zhurnalist, December, 1974, p. 33.

22. Ibid.

23. Zhurnalist, February, 1968, p. 24.

24. Zhurnalist, July, 1969, pp. 9-10.

25. Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm, Four Theories of the Press, Urbana, 1974, University of Illinois Press, p. 60.

26. John Hohenberg, The Professional Journalist, New York, 1978, Holt Rinehart Winston, p. 16.

27. Zhurnalist, February, 1978, p. 38.

28. Zhurnalist, December, 1974, p. 33.

29. Zhurnalist, February, 1978, pp. 38-39.

30. Ibid., p. 39

31. Ibid., p. 32

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.